

**REMARKS BY
GENERAL JAMES T. CONWAY,
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ARMED FORCES FOUNDATION CONGRESSIONAL GALA
ON CMC AND MRS. CONWAY RECEIVING THE “CONGRESSMAN BILL AND BEVERLY YOUNG
LEADERSHIP AWARD”
MANDARIN ORIENTAL HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D.C.
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I'll dare to speak on behalf of Annette tonight and thank the congressman and the Foundation for this award. It's really meaningful to be honored by such a marvelous organization that does so much. I'm going to take off my Commandant's hat for just a moment, if I can, and make two points as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

First of all, I will admit to you folks that we badly miscalculated this young generation that is fighting for us in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the turn of the century, folks my age, at least in the Marine Corps, looked at this group that was coming in and said, "You know, a lot of obesity there. They watch a lot of TV. They don't get outside as much as we did. Perhaps there's not as much discipline." We just weren't sure that they were going to be good soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines.

Ladies and gentlemen, we could not have been more wrong. This is an absolutely marvelous generation. I've seen them in combat. Their raw courage, their sense of selflessness, and their sense of team play is literally eye-watering. I confess that all of our Services are going to be in great shape for a long time to come as these young men and women reach increased positions of responsibility.
[Cheers, applause]

My second point is that organizations like AFF [*Armed Forces Foundation*] and numerous others are so critically important to our Nation in winning these fights; you cannot overestimate their contribution. In 2003, before we crossed the border into Iraq, the lead question in the troops' minds was, "Is the country behind us?" I was in Iraq and Afghanistan fourteen days ago. The lead question in their mind is still, "Is the country behind us?"

I'll offer to you an analogy. When a Marine fire team or an Army squad gets ready to take down a building, the troops go into a "stack." There is tremendous reliance in that stack — on each other. When they're all lined up and they're ready, the last guy reaches up and double-taps the Marine or soldier in front of him, and he does the same thing to the next man, and he does the same thing to the lead man who is about to go through that door. There is absolute confidence that every man in that stack knows his job. When that point man kicks open the door, he looks through his small sight; he looks only left in that door — because he knows that number two is about a fraction of a second behind him and he's looking right; and number three is right behind him and he's looking up. They know that they have each other's back. And that's what they ask of foundations like this — that *you* have their back.

If that point man goes down, he wants to know that his family is provided for. If he's hurt and he comes from the desert wounded, he wants to know he's going to be provided for. As long as organizations like this and many, many others continue to give to these great young Americans that generous support, they'll go anywhere and they'll do anything we ask on behalf of this great Nation. Again, thank you very much. *[Applause]*

(END OF TRANSCRIPT)